

VZCZCXRO3856
RR RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHHE #1197 3351238
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 011238Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2789
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 4719
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 0190

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 001197

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [RU](#) [GG](#) [FI](#)
SUBJECT: EU-RUSSIA SUMMIT: FM TUOMIOJA'S SIDEBARS WITH
BEZHUASHVILI AND LAVROV

Classified By: POLCHIEF Gregory Thome for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) On 29 November, DCM met with Finnish MFA Political Director Pilvi-Sisko Vierros Villeneuve and discussed FM Erkki Tuomioja's recent consultations with Georgian FM Gela Bezhuashvili and Russian FM Sergei Lavrov on the margins of the 24 November EU-Russia summit. Though Tuomioja's initial goal of arranging a face to face meeting between the foreign ministers did not come to fruition, his bilateral meetings with each were productive and DCM welcomed his efforts. Vierros Villeneuve stated that the Finns already sensed in the conversation with Bezhuashvili a lowering of the temperature from the Tbilisi side; Georgia was beginning to speak less about Russian involvement in Georgian internal affairs and more about Tbilisi engaging its separatist regions.

¶2. (C) Vierros Villeneuve also noted two positive, though unintended consequences of the recent escalation between Georgia and Russia: the Russian ban on Georgian wine forced Georgia to investigate other markets (including Finland), and it has brought greater EU and international attention to Georgia's "long-standing frustrations" with Moscow. Finland in the future hopes to increase its level of involvement in Georgia both under EU auspices and bilaterally through "soft policies." Vierros Villeneuve was also encouraged by the appointment of the new Georgian defense minister.

¶3. (C) Vierros Villeneuve stated that Lavrov, in his bilateral meeting with Tuomioja, reiterated Putin's recent public statements on Georgia, and stated that Georgia's separatist regions were an internal matter for Georgia -- not an issue between Georgia and Russia. As with the Georgian side, the Finns sensed a lowering of temperature and rhetoric from Moscow, but believed Lavrov had been sidelined in Georgian relations because of the Presidential Administration's apparent level of involvement. "The issues are not in the hands of Lavrov -- they are very much with Putin," Vierros Villeneuve said. The Finnish Presidency also sees the decrease in recent reports of harassment of Georgians in Russia as a positive sign. Though Tuomioja's attempts to bring the two sides together were unsuccessful, the Finns appeared pleased with the results of their efforts.

WARE